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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 43rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. LEHMANN (Denmark)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 139: UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME OF ASSISTANCE IN THE TEACHING, STUDY, DISSEMINATION AND WIDER APPRECIATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW (continued) (A/50/726; A/C.6/50/2)

1. The CHAIRMAN, after a procedural debate in which Ms. WILLSON (United States of America) took part, announced that the Committee had completed its debate on agenda item 139.

AGENDA ITEM 144: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH THE HOST COUNTRY (continued) (A/50/26, A/50/112-S/1995/207; A/C.6/50/L.8; A/AC.154/284)

2. Mr. ORDZONIKIDZE (Russian Federation) said that his delegation attached great importance to the work of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, which worked to ensure that normal conditions existed for the efficient operation of the United Nations and of the missions accredited to it. He noted with satisfaction that the Committee had continued to focus on practical and concrete measures to solve problems between Member States of the United Nations and the host country and to promote mutual understanding. He also appreciated the efforts made by the authorities of the United States of America and the New York City Commission for the United Nations and Consular Corps to solve the problems faced by diplomats in New York City.

3. The Russian Federation supported the Committee's recommendations and conclusions (A/50/26, para. 67); they were very practical and were aimed at solving pending problems on the basis of confidence and mutual respect. In that regard, he stressed the useful work carried out by the Working Group on Indebtedness, whose recommendations could help create favourable public opinion towards the United Nations and the missions accredited to it.

4. With regard to measures to accelerate immigration and customs procedures, he said that, although several terminals at J. F. Kennedy airport had opened special windows for diplomats, that had not yet been done for those arriving on flights from Moscow. He hoped that the issue, which his delegation had raised on several occasions, would be resolved as soon as possible.

5. Another pending matter was that of travel restrictions imposed on personnel of certain missions and certain staff members of the United Nations Secretariat. The Russian Federation's position, under international law, on that discriminatory practice, was well known. It was important to bear in mind the new political realities and to leave behind outdated stereotypes. He hoped that the relevant authorities of the host country would react accordingly.

6. The parking problem, which affected practically all the accredited missions, had continued to deteriorate. The Committee should redouble its efforts to solve that complex and difficult question, so as avoid unnecessary complaints.

7. A certain lack of coordination between the protocol and security services of the United Nations and those of the host country had become evident during the last two major events organized by the United Nations, namely, the visit of the Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church and the activities relating to the presence of a large number of Heads of State and Government on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization. There had been problems of access to Headquarters and of free movement in the surrounding area. That type of celebration should not in any way affect the normal work of the missions. The Committee should draw up recommendations to ensure that the protocol and security services would be able to work more effectively.

8. Ms. WILLSON (United States of America) said that her Government was both honoured and proud to have served as the host country to the United Nations for over 50 years, and was looking forward to hosting a revitalized, reformed and more capable United Nations well into the next century. Along with that honour came a range of obligations, and her Government was committed to fulfilling them in every respect.

9. The Committee on Relations with the Host Country was a valuable forum in which to discuss, in a constructive and cooperative spirit, issues relating to the presence of the world's largest diplomatic community. Perhaps the Committee's greatest achievement during the past year had been its work on the problem of diplomatic indebtedness. The fruit of that work was reflected in paragraph 4 of draft resolution A/C.6/50/L.8. Those efforts had already had a salutary effect. Over the past year, more than a million dollars in debt had been paid, although total indebtedness remained at a record-breaking US$ 9 million. It was to be hoped that that figure would begin to decrease as a result of the Committee's efforts and the adoption by the General Assembly of the draft resolution. Once the debt problem began to recede, members of the diplomatic community should find it less difficult to rent apartments or get commercial and personal credit.

10. The host country had continued to look into the problem of parking of diplomatic vehicles and would continue to work with the City of New York to address the legitimate concerns of the diplomatic community.

11. Travel controls had been established on a basis of the national security interests of the United States, and had in no way interfered with its obligation as host country to grant access to the Headquarters district. On the other hand, she would like to emphasize that her Government undertook periodic reviews of all its policies, and that it was possible that adjustments in such policies might be made in light of changing circumstances.

12. Finally, she said that in addition to providing services to the resident diplomatic community, the host country welcomed those who came each year to take part in the debates of the General Assembly. She hoped that they would enjoy their stay.

13. Mrs. CUETO MILIÁN (Cuba) drew attention to document A/AC.154/284, which was not included in annex I to document A/50/26, since it had been issued at a later date.

14. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Committee had completed its debate on agenda item 144.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.